1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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in the name of the Hindu deities invoked. Although this activity has recently been somewhat curtailed for reasons soon to be discussed, it is still possible to observe Santal worshipping Jugganath at the Cart Festival (*Rath Jatra*) in Baripoda, the capital of Mayurbhanj. Many Santal, even in villages where there are few Hindus, may also be seen immersing the Hindu Tusu goddess. In spite of these activities, in which most Santal have engaged, and even though all Santal ceremonies have some Hindu elements, almost all southern Santal have remained firmly attached to their own deities, and there have been no mass conversions.

The Indian government's figures on Hindu religious identification are largely an artifice of census methods, and since at least the 1920's, often of coercion as well. Culshaw, for example, commments that:

> The prevailing Indian identification of race with religion has caused some confusion in their [the Santals'] minds, but the fact that about 50 per cent of Santal were returned in 1931 as Hindus and most of the remainder as followers of tribal religion indicated the heightened political consciousness of the enumerators more than any real division within the tribe.[2]

Many Santal reported to me that they were pressured by local Hindu authorities to register themselves as Hindus. Others claimed that ignorance played a major role in the returns; the census-takers asked, "What is your religion?" (*Dhorom*; Oriya), and most Santal, it is said, did not understand this word. When it was explained they would reply "Santal religion," and the census-taker would then say, "That is your caste (*jāti*), not

[2] Culshaw 1949:15.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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your religion. Are you Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or what?" By this means the census-takers might obtain the desired result. However, it should be remembered that neither Culshaw, who is a Christian missionary, nor the presently very communally oriented Santal are disinterested observers.

There is no question that since the 1920's at least, Hindu organizations like Arya Samaj have actively campaigned to get tribals to declare themselves as Hindus. Such declarations were regarded as demonstrations of national unity and as refutations of the charge that India was so culturally and socially diverse as to be incapable of nationhood. In view of Hindu pressures and census irregularities, the returns reported may at the most indicate that Santals were finding it increasingly difficult to muster the solidarity to resist Hindu pressure for common religious identification. At the very least, the returns may simply reflect Hindu pressure generated by the Independence Movement.

In spite of the manifold pressures operating to weaken Santal solidarity, there are few cases of actual social absorption. Apparently, the endogenous forces contributing to solidarity have been sufficient to prevent this from happening. However, in view of the experience of other tribes and because of the increase in centrifugal pressures created by industrial employment, it appears that further social absorption was imminent. Certainly centrifugal pressures had increased, and if the political rank path had not suddenly reopened in the 1930's, it seems likely that the Santal would have become as Hinduized as their neighbors, the Bhumij.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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The Hindu "Kamar" does work for them, the "Kumhars" make their pots and plates, the "Tantis" weave their clothes and some other depressed class Hindus mostly live within their localities. The influence of the Hindus living nearby saturates the thoughts and ideas of the Santals, and when we remember that ethnologically many of these Hindus were aboriginals in origin, we can find out the reasons why many Santals are really anxious to describe themselves as Hindus like their neighbours. In their rural settlements, one can find the Santals joining the worship of the Hindu gods and goddesses like Durga, Kali and Mahadev. Like the rest of the Hindus, they salute these deities and the entire tribe dance and amuse themselves during these ceremonies.

Population

A recent worker on the Tribal Demography in India[1] regrets that the data on the tribals are the most inaccurate of all gathered together in Census reports. The net effect, he says, is to understate the number of tribals and correspondingly to overstate the number of other groups.

I. Singh, in his *Development and Adibasis*, in Asian Labour, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Jan. 1950) says, "Adibasis...number not less than 30 millions accord-

1 *Tribal Demography in India* by C. B. Mamoria, p. 24.

St Mukherjea O. Y-4,8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

659 114 ing to the verdict of the scientists at the last session of the Indian Science Congress." He calls it "unreliable," and says, "it would be nearer truth to say that ethnically, tribal numbers would be four times what is shown in the Census."

162 The most important tribes, according to the Census of 1951, are Gond—1,232,886; Santal—28,11,578, Bhil—1,160,299: Oraon—6,44,042: Khond—280,561: Munda—5,85,211.

The total number of scheduled tribes, according to the Census of 1951 stands at 19·1 millions. So it has been computed that out of 1000 Indians, 54 belong to the tribal communities.

This may be usefully compared with the previous population figures. According to the Census of 1931, the aboriginal population of India numbered 22½ millions in round numbers and formed 6½ p.c of the total Indian population. Then also, the Gonds stood first in number, the Santals second and the Bhils third.

The total number of Santals in (undivided) India, in 1941 has been tabulated by Rev. J. Gausdal[1] to be 2,902,266 (N.B. He gives his own estimate of Assam and Nepal figures).

In 1931, they numbered 2,508,789 from 2,265,282 in 1921. As has been already stated

1 *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Science, Vol. XIX, p. 4.